



Sword Creates FUSION Between the Construction Industry & Collaboration Technology

Sword CTSpace



Finally a supplier of collaboration and document management applications for the construction industry is taking a customer centric view of how solutions should be supplied. Sword's latest range of applications, "Fusion", have been developed through taking the industries viewpoint of considering not only function, but form and finance also.

Having initially brought together some of the best engineering and construction applications into the same stable, i.e. the bringing together through acquisition of BuildOnline, Citadon CW, Cimage & Novasoft, Sword decided to take a fresh and different approach. Before embarking on an exercise to simply extract the best of each of these applications into a best in class application portfolio, Sword decided to take a broader look at the requirements of the industry by putting themselves in their customers' boots!

A key success factor of any major asset's construction & operation is the careful balance and consideration of the often conflicting requirements of Function, Form & Finance. Whilst on the surface this seems specific to the industry, on further evaluation Sword soon realised there were valuable lessons they could learn which in turn would also bring them closer to their customers.

Functionality is always a key design focus for any software developer, however as the provider of numerous other high value business application's Sword group also provided a wealth of experience to the development team in understanding the business demands in addition to the pure functional requirements. The design scope was therefore expanded to include how functionality would be provided or exposed, the form and format in which it was made available, and lastly but by no means least a flexible review of the financial options for licensing and support.

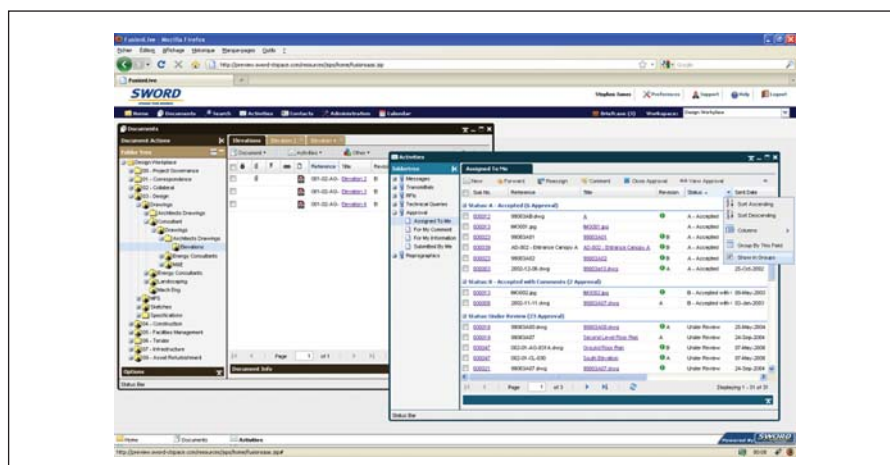


Figure 1: Screenshot - FusionLive Multi-windows

The evaluation and analysis of customer feedback when viewed from this perspective gave a very different perspective on requirements and lead to several adjustments in the priority and phasing of the aggressive Fusion development programme.

FORM - In addition to the usual progress you would expect from a major application developer in terms of "what" new features & functions should be included, Sword paid particular attention to "how" these were to be delivered. One result of this alternative method of approach lead to a major enhancement of the web based user interface using some of the latest technology available. This was to ensure that multiple windows could not only be viewed simultaneously and manipulated individually to suit a users specific requirements but also that multiple, parallel tasks or processes could be initiated as if the user was using a desktop application. As the result of this approach, Sword's latest version of their FusionLive (SaaS based) hosted application not only brings together the rich functionality from the BuildOnline &

Citadon CW products, but delivers this through an innovative, customisable and highly productive Web based user interface.

FUNCTION - The industry has for a long time been faced with a pretty stark choice when it comes to collaboration and document management applications in terms of the "way" in which the solution is delivered. To date all software vendors have developed applications that are only available to run as either a hosted or a stand-alone solution. Whilst as a point solution this may be acceptable at any given phase, these solutions rarely address the evolving requirements of the numerous parties involved throughout an assets design, construct, operate & maintain lifecycle. With experience from their various heritage products, Sword have been able to present a range of offerings with similar functionality that are available as either hosted "FusionLive" or in-house "FusionEnterprise" solutions. For the in-house solution Sword have also understood that the ideal "form" may involve running on existing infrastructure

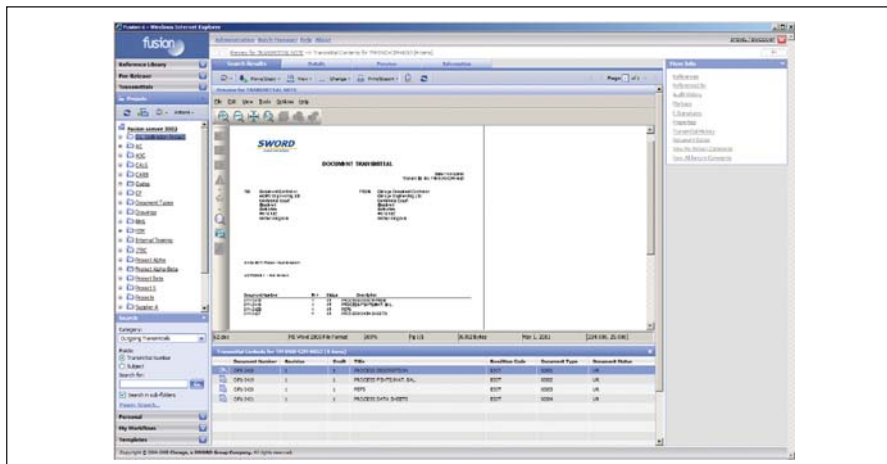


Figure 2: Screenshot - Fusion project document control

or content management platforms, so FusionEnterprise is also available to run on IBM FileNet P8 or Microsoft SharePoint. In addition to allowing customers to adopt whichever solution is most appropriate at the time, Sword are developing both real time integration in addition to import/export mechanisms between these solutions. This will enable the asset information to be passed seamlessly between them as the

requirements of the asset change from conception through to completion and into operation & maintenance ensuring each stakeholder's specific requirements can be satisfied at any given time.

FINANCE - Having developed the most flexible portfolio of engineering collaboration and content management applications, this philosophy of understanding the demands of the industry through working closely with

customers and listening, has continued through to the way in which Sword's applications can be procured. Sword can provide a range of different procurement models from usage fees to perpetual licenses a combination or migration between the two, to enable the project and or owner/operator to balance the costs in relation to usage demands and finances.

Sword are now 2 years into this new approach and this way of thinking has become an integral part of their day to day operations. Throughout 2010, Sword will be releasing major enhancements to their engineering application portfolio incorporating major upgrades of both FusionLive and FusionEnterprise. These products are the direct result of this refreshing new approach and are already beginning to attract some significant attention from major engineering contractors and owner operators in addition to industry and IT analysts. Sword are no stranger however to this type of success being an experienced provider of global support for international projects and organizations with over 13,000 projects in 56 countries. ■



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